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**AN ADDRESS**

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

**TWO LITERARY SOCIETIES**

OF THE

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH-CAROLINA,**

BY

**HON. WILLIAM B. SHEPARD,**

JUNE 27, 1838.

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**RALEIGH:**

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE RALEIGH REGISTER.

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*University of North-Carolina, July 2, 1838.*

DEAR SIR :

The Philanthropic Society, through us, their Committee, tender to you their thanks for the very excellent, classic, and appropriate ADDRESS, delivered before the two Literary bodies of the University, on the day preceding Commencement, and request of you a copy for publication. The importance of the subject selected by you, in giving discipline to the mind and increasing the store of useful knowledge, together with the able manner in which you have developed it, will, it is hoped, justify the desire to give publicity to the truths and sentiments contained in the Address.

Yours, respectfully,

DENNIS D. FEREBEE,  
OLIVER H. PRINCE, } Committee.  
THOMAS H. SPRUILL, }

HON. WILLIAM B. SHEPARD.

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*Raleigh, July 4, 1838.*

GENTLEMEN :

I have received your letter of the 2d, requesting a copy of the Address delivered by me before the two Societies of Chapel-Hill, at the Commencement.

In complying with this request, I must regret that the Address is not more worthy of your flattering remarks.

With respect, I remain

Your obedient servant,

W. B. SHEPARD.

To Messrs. DENNIS D. FEREBEE,  
OLIVER H. PRINCE, } Committee.  
THOMAS H. SPRUILL, }

## ADDRESS.

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### GENTLEMEN OF THE PHILANTHROPIC AND DIALECTIC SOCIETIES:

Upon this occasion, in renewing my acquaintance with you, as members of the two Literary Societies of the University of my native State, it is impossible for me to repress the feelings of old associations, or the recollection of times, though long since past, yet still fresh in the memory. In lingering amidst these scenes, "I can ne'er forget though here I am forgot," imagination forcibly recalls the joys and the sorrows, the friends and the follies of the sunny season of life. Let me pay a passing tribute of remembrance to the absent, while I acknowledge with much gratification, the agreeable associations of the present.

The scenes of a College life leave perhaps a deeper and more agreeable impression upon our minds, than any thing in previous or future years. It is there the vista of life first opens upon us, exhibiting its alluring prospects, its animating scenes, and its enticing variety. We bound from its restraints like the well trained courser panting for the goal, and whether we have missed or gained the prize, we look back amidst the petty strifes and low ambition of after life, to our residence here, as embracing the purest and happiest days of our existence.

Within the College walls, the first aspirations after fame of the elastic and vigorous spirit of youth, are breathed forth, and whether they are mocked or realized, we revisit the place of their birth with feelings which, although of a melancholy nature, yet abound in pleasant recollections.

We linger with delight amidst groves consecrated to genius and to science, where

Not a leaf but trembling teems

With youthful visions and romantic dreams.

We are reminded at each step of some almost forgotten tale of youthful rivalry, or perhaps the remembrance rushes upon us, of some young friend suddenly arrested in his career of hope or anticipation.

As Students, you are familiar with these workings of the fancy; detached by your occupations from the cares and pursuits of life, you can exist for a time in the regions of the imagination; you can look beyond the indulgence of the appetites, for those pure and ethereal pleasures which emanate entirely from the mind, that living fountain of the beautiful and sublime. Having enjoyed the blessings of education, you will hereafter estimate this mental luxury as one of its richest treasures, the distinguishing pre-eminence of the intellectual man, over the grovelling son of earth—a possession which enables us to escape for a period beyond the reach of power, pain, or poverty, and while it creates for us a world of our own, enables us to people it with our absent and departed friends.

Coming, Gentlemen, as I so recently have, from those pursuits, which are unfortunately now conducted in such a manner, as merely to excite the more selfish feelings of the human heart, it was with some reluctance

and misgiving, that I accepted your invitation to deliver an address within these walls, sacred to the investigation of truth, and the production of beauty, the ultimate objects of Science and Literature. I have thought however with Ansonius, that what Cæsar judged I was equal to, I might perform.

*Cur me posse negem, posse quod ille putat ?*

Duly impressed with the difficulty of answering your flattering summons, and conscious that

*Nil dictu fœdum visuque hæc limina tanget*

*Intra quæ puer est.*

I have endeavored, at humble distance, to imitate those sages of old, who purified their minds before they approached the sacred altars.

There are few subjects which more vitally contribute to the judicious education of the youth of our country, nor any which I can conceive more interesting to this assembly, than the relative importance of a familiar acquaintance with Classical Literature. It is much to be regretted, that, in our country particularly, such learning is frequently undervalued, and we too often hear it asserted in conversation, that the time devoted by the Students of our Universities to the study of the dead languages, is thrown away, or could be more valuably employed in the acquirement of some art or mystery, which more immediately conduces to the comfort or well-being of society.

If this assertion were strictly true, there would be an end of the discussion. In what consists the perfection of our species, is a very debateable question ; the roaming and untutored savage firmly believes, that so long as the face of nature is opened to his wanderings, so long as he can unmolested pursue the deer upon the mountain top, or supply the few wants of a precarious

existence, with the natural fruits of the valley, he fully complies with the end and aim of his existence. The indolent Turk, reposing upon the lap of luxury, dreaming away a life of ease and sensual gratification, believes he fulfils his destiny, so long as all his personal wants are adequately supplied. In our mechanical and utilitarian age, we hear it boldly asserted, that all is vanity which contributes to the refinement and the polish of society.

What is Society ? Is it the mere aggregation of individuals, where numbers alone constitute merit ? Where the human species are to be enumerated like a drove of cattle, and the only question for the consideration of the Philosopher is, how many can the fruits of the earth be made to maintain ? Or rather is it not the Corinthian Capital which should adorn the solid column of sound existence ? Is it not the charmed circle of civilization, where the lights and shadows of life are collected to a focus, "where whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise in them," they should be collected for the ornament and embellishment of a race which the disposer of events has placed in social relations.

Should we reduce the exertions of man to the standard of mere utility, we level the palace with the hovel, we banish all the luxuries, and most of the conveniencies of life, we take from art its ingenuity, and from science its knowledge, in fact we would deprive mankind of the better part of those faculties bestowed upon us by a beneficent Creator for a wise and useful purpose, who—

“Not content  
With every food of life to nourish man,  
Hast made all nature beauty to his eye,  
Or music to his ear.”

But moreover, where will these objectors draw the line of distinction, between the useful and the ornamental? Let us look abroad through the history of our species, and what is there in the highest refinements of art, and the costliest display of luxury, which has not in some measure, tended to soften our manners and chasten our feelings?

Such in truth is the unconquerable propensity of man, to indulge the longing of his nature for all that is beautiful, that he cannot view the lofty and regal pile, erected by tyranny, as an abode and shelter for luxury, without losing in admiration of the splendid structure, all recollection of the sighs and groans of the thousands who labored in its construction.

And can we truly say, there is nothing useful in these emotions? Do they not expand the mind and enlarge the sphere of human pleasures? In converse with nature alone, apart from the haunts of men, the invalid, whose mind is depressed with the injustice and folly of the world, can extract a healing balm for his wound, but it is only amidst the stirring scenes of life, amidst the triumphs of intellect and the embellishments of art, that the active spirit of man is nerved for his duties and stimulated to emulate the achievements of those who have preceded him

In the marble porch, where wisdom wont to talk  
With Socrates and Tully.

It is a melancholy reflection, that in our country, near the middle of the nineteenth century, we should hear it asserted in any respectable quarter, that the study of



Ancient Literature was a waste of time. In Europe, at this day, no man who values his reputation for sanity, would venture to intimate a doubt of the importance of an acquaintance with Classical Literature. The controversy upon that subject, which once disturbed the literary world, has there long since ceased, and the mutinous spirits, by common consent, have returned to their allegiance, and acknowledged their fealty to the illustrious dead.

In our young and ambitious country, where we seem to think that we are, by instinct, all that man ever was, or ever can be, lingering doubts are yet sturdily maintained upon this important subject by a few querulous disputants.

I will not, Gentlemen, do you the injustice to suppose that you have been such ungrateful recipients of the bounties of your Alma Mater, as to partake of these doubts, or that any thing I can say can add to your conviction of the importance of a knowledge of this interesting subject. I could not, however, resist the temptation of adding my feeble testimony, which several years experience in the world has tended to confirm, of its indispensable importance in every branch of the liberal professions, and of its necessity to any thing approaching excellence, in that arena where it is the hope of most aspiring American youths, at some period of their lives, "to flesh the maiden sword."

It is true, we have in the history of our country many bright examples of the triumph of unassisted intellect; rare, however, are the instances, and few are the minds which can rise superior to the disadvantages of fortune. On the contrary, what exalted mental excellence might not these individuals have reached, if they had been



fully possessed with the rich stores of experience of those who had gone before them? And moreover, few even of these gifted persons, great in their generation as they undoubtedly were, have made any permanent impression upon the age in which they lived. They appear among us as those freaks of nature, the brilliant Northern Lights, shedding around their own paths a bright but transient splendour, but never becoming fixed stars in the firmament. No genius, however bright, no mental powers, however acute, can ever reach their due grade in this intellectual age, unless they are fully possessed of the recorded wisdom of those sages who have gone before them. The contrary opinion is a pernicious heresy in the education of our youth, which has too often left them as gallant barks stranded upon the shore, or floating upon the ocean of life, without rudder to guide or sails to impel their onward course.

Genius is nothing more than the general strength of intellect, accompanied with the power of applying that strength to a specific purpose. Where this power is not called into action, or strengthened by judicious cultivation, genius is an useless and pernicious quality.—Hence we find so many young men of quick and vivid perceptions, satisfied with the mere glimpses they have obtained of science or literature, turn away with loathing from that patient application, that methodical study, that toil of years, which is indispensable to excellence. Some, perhaps, may dazzle for a moment as meteors, and after having excited the rapturous applause of injudicious friends, and failing to take by storm

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“the steep  
Where fame’s proud temple shines afar,”

they sink into despondency, and complete an inglorious manhood with an old age of obscurity.

In urging upon your attention the great importance of cultivating an acquaintance with that Literature, which has received the seal of time, which has been criticised and discussed by the wisdom of a thousand years, I am by no means disposed to pay to antiquity those honours which are due only to excellence. We must beware lest we permit ourselves to be dazzled by a brilliancy increased by the shades of ages, as transient glimpses of the sun are more apt to oppress the sight, when escaping from beneath the mist.

Bigotry in Literature is as fatal to improvement as it is in Religion, and he only is an honest and faithful worshipper at the holy shrine, who is at peace with all mankind, and who is disposed to render equal and impartial justice to all his brethren.

The world of letters has been justly styled a Republic, where there should be no monarch but truth, no rule of conduct but the justness and fitness of things.—How unworthy, then, would it be for us, in this land of toleration, to be the first who had sacrilegiously rifled the tombs of the illustrious dead, or who should inhumanly deny them those honors which a grateful posterity had united in according to them.

We are too much in the habit, in the United States, while indulging in opium dreams of our future wonderful achievements and unsurpassed magnificence, to forget those incipient steps by which these great results are to be brought about. No impartial man can deny, that in the literature of fact, of education, of politics, and of practical science, the people of the United States can stand a fair comparison with the rest of the world. But

in those ornamental branches of literature or art, which are the results of a high state of civilization, we are lamentably deficient. A deficiency the more hopeless, because we can agree upon no standard by which we can compare our youthful exertions.

While we are told in the lucubrations of one of our Philosophical Societies,\* that "the ancient languages will perish under the mass of knowledge destined to occupy the human mind," we find every fantastic conception, every ridiculous extravagance of the morbid literature of England, where the idol of to-day is the jest of to-morrow, taking root and flourishing among us.

Our country is in its infancy: let us guard that infancy with great care and jealousy, lest it exhibit itself in the dress of age, without the formality and decorum of manhood, and without its vigour.

Infancy is prone to imitation; it is a law of nature which cannot be obviated. Let us then select for our models those works which, by the concurrent testimony of all ages, have been acknowledged to be excellent.—By imitation, I do not mean that slavish copying, which, at a pish distance, affects the faults, more than the beauties of its author. I mean that frequent study and critical examination which is necessary to imbue the mind with the spirit of the author; which teaches us what is worthy of admiration, and that which should be avoided: in fact, that search and scrutiny which is necessary to find the road to excellence, which serves to indicate its steep and thorny path, as well as its pleasant retreats and delightful prospects.

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\* Annual Oration before the American Philosophical Society, October 18, 1823.

Placed as we are in an age of great mental activity, in direct contact with older nations, who have passed through the various gradations assigned for the human mind, we must take care, lest, excited by fashion, or depressed by ridicule, we permit ourselves to be led astray by some temporary idol of the day, or deterred from the path of reason by the sneers of our cotemporaries. Our youths have the spirit of the high blooded courser: let their training be severe, for the race is long, and the prize is great.

Among those persons who repudiate the study of the ancient languages, yet who do not consider Latin and Greek as absolutely a species of black art, a sort of magic, to be shunned by all well-disposed people—are to be found many, who, while they admit the necessity of some system of study, give a decided preference to the literature of England, as best adapted to our age, and of more immediate utility.

Were the merits of the two Literatures undoubtedly equal, the bare fact that one is the production of a living language upon which time has not fixed the stamp of fate, should make us pause in its selection. Fashion, caprice, and party spirit have such direct influence upon our taste, and the judgment of our cotemporaries, that by universal consent, time is regarded as the only just arbiter. Should we adopt as our model, the decisions of English taste and English criticism, we would surrender our judgments to the whims and prejudices of an arbiter, whose opinions are as capricious as the fluctuations of her own stock exchange. We would imbibe all the faults and conceits of a Literature, which is now solely occupied in imagining new enjoyments and new excitements, for the sated appetites of a

voluptuous community, enervated by luxury, and offering wealth and honors most lavishly to the fortunate adventurer who can contrive for it a new pleasure.

Should we go back to the best days of English Literature, the days of Queen Anne, and seek for models in the purity of Addison, the vigor of Swift, and the splendid diction of Bolingbroke, we find here also the same party spirit obscuring our vision, and marring our judgment.

Although I would not degrade these celebrated men, ("who gave too much to party of that which was meant for mankind") into the same paragraph with the petty dealers in slander of our times, yet it must be admitted, to the reproach of poor human nature, that their writings contain so much of mere temporary rivalry, that it is difficult to separate the dying from the living particle. Whereas, the defects and impurities of the ancient writings, have long since disappeared, or been universally acknowledged and pointed out; like the body that contained them, their deformities have ages ago mingled with their kindred dust, and nothing remains to us but their pure and immortal spirits.

In estimating the merits of the ancients, we are not embarrassed by the favouritism of friends or the competition of rivals; their friendships and enmities are alike no more; the insinuations of envy and the invectives of party are no longer heard, and the mind left to itself, free and unperverted, selects without passion and without prejudice, whatever contributes to refine the taste, to excite the intellect, or to purify the feelings.

In speaking of Homer, we are told by one of the best English critics, "that nation after nation, century after century, have been able to do little more than trans-

pose his incidents, new name his characters, and paraphrase his sentiments." Why then should we condemn ourselves to drink of the turbid and polluted stream, when we can approach the head of the fountain and quaff its waters clear and undefiled.

Should the Student seek among the lively French for models, he will find in the brilliant era of Louis XIV., but copies of the Classic originals, and what is worse, he will find genius fawning and flattering at the footstool of power, and philosophy a mountebank in society, with a disgusting persiflage and insane scoffing at every thing holy in Religion and sacred in morals.

As a question of taste then, apart from other well grounded considerations, the decision should be in favor of the ancient classics. The national mind will then have a fixed and undoubted standard before it, not blown about by every wind of doctrine; by which means it may be weaned from that servile imitation of the ephemeral Literature of Europe, which now trammels it, and relying upon its own strength it would assume a confident tone, which is indispensable to any valuable improvement as well as mental independence.

Closely connected as we are in language, feelings and old associations with our parent stock, and unrivalled as her Literature undoubtedly is among the moderns, it is yet much to be regretted, that we import along with Manchester Cottons and Sheffield Cutlery, her literary dicta, which scarcely endure as long as the fashions she sends us.

Such is the despotic power exercised by British criticism over American Literature, that we are told by one of our most successful authors (Mr. Cooper,) who at the same time is the most national in his feelings,

that our literary men hold their reputations at the mercy of the British press. Our boldest and most redoubted critics tremble for their decisions, until they hear they are endorsed on the other side of the water. They remind us forcibly of Ovids' description of Echo,

*Nec loqui prius ipsa didicit nec otiare loquenti.*

The imprimatur of one of our most learned Universities, would be considered in those parts of the Union, where learning is most regarded, as literary treasure, if it were received with a sneer by the Edinburg or Quarterly Reviews.

As the ancient Greeks formerly travelled into Egypt to gather the learning of the Priests, so our candidates for Literary Honors present themselves before the American public, qualified by a London puff, to receive the applause of their obedient countrymen. We shall never escape from this disgraceful vassalage, until some great literary Washington shall arise, whose influence with his countrymen will be sufficient to achieve their mental independence.

In the mean time, however, you may do much ; you can rouse the youth of our country to noble exertions, by pointing out to them the monuments of antiquity, and stimulating their exertions to rival their fame, by telling them, as the French Soldiers were told amidst the sands of the desert, that from their lofty summits a thousand centuries are regarding their actions.

It is very foreign from my intention, to attempt any thing like a comparison of the relative merits of ancient and modern Literature. To do such a subject justice would require a learning to which I make no pretensions. I can barely throw out for your consideration,



the crude conceptions of one who has been scarcely permitted to stand upon the vast ocean of Science, occasionally picking up upon its beach, some of those beautiful productions cast ashore by its waste of waters ; but who has had neither the skill or the courage to launch his bark upon its wide and limitless extent, either to explore its known wonders, or to seek its hidden treasures.

It requires, however, but a very superficial acquaintance with the ancients to appreciate their distinguishing traits. If the observation is correct, and I see no reason to doubt its truth, “ that nothing can please many and please long, but just representations of general nature,” there can be no doubt of the superiority of the ancient over the modern School.

The distinction between the classical and the modern or romantic style of Literature, is as vast as the different aspects of that nature from which each one draws its stores, and which each attempts to describe. The one represents her when she is in her usual attire, calm, sunny, refreshed by the genial breeze, abundance and pleasure joyous in her train ; the other represents her freaks when she is disturbed by storms, or deluged by the occasional flood.

The one is conversant with objects grand and beautiful in themselves, needing no trick or disguise to impose them upon the mind, but striking the most unsophisticated understanding as agreeable to the ordinary course of events ; the other, drawing its images almost exclusively from the imagination, shocks us with its unnatural distortions, and compels us to lash our fancy to its wildest mood, before we can appreciate its beauties, or comprehend its object.



When Homer brings his Gods upon the stage, they speak an intelligible language, they reason as mortals of a larger growth ; the romantic school introduces us to beings, whose end and object we cannot comprehend :

So withered and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't.

The one cultivates the imaginative powers at the expense of the other faculties of the mind, and if by any sudden concussion, the dreamy votary of fancy should be aroused from his mental stupor, he will discover perhaps too late, that he has mistaken the blossom for the fruit.

The constant stimulants which are thus applied particularly in this country, by means of this Literature of the imagination, is one of the prominent causes of that feverish state of the public mind among us, which is continually hurrying the people from one excitement to another, to the serious injury of the ordinary business of life, as well as of its social comfort and domestic duties.

The attractive style of allegory and romance, is now supposed so necessary to insure attention, that from the horn book of the child to the grave and serious topics of our holy religion, every idea must be conveyed to the youthful mind, through the disguise of fiction.—These teachers seem to forget, that every thing valuable in life or which is destined to remain long with us, is the fruit of labour and toil ; by the “sweat of the brow” alone, the fruits of the earth are enjoyed, and by the labor of acquiring knowledge, the mind becomes strengthened and its powers enlarged ; these philosophers will be disappointed in looking for a royal road to learning.

The great diffusion of wealth in our times, together with the indolence, the ostentation, and the superficial education which that wealth has increased, has reduced genius to the necessity of catering for this diseased appetite, and has contributed very much to stimulate the production of that light and frivolous literature, so eagerly devoured among us, and which is doing so much to debase and destroy the vigorous powers of the intellect.

Hence it is, that the unfortunate victim of a diseased imagination is incapable of appreciating the merits of those persons who move forward in the career of life, with no other guide for their actions than a stern and uncompromising sense of duty. Let me advise you, Gentlemen, to beware of the insidious approaches of this seducing flatterer, and however much you may be ridiculed, as behind what is called the onward spirit of the age, although you may hear your native State on the same ground, daily assailed by the puny politicians of the Union, (those miserable retailers of verbiage, who are always ready to sell their words and their anger, wherever they are so fortunate as to find purchasers) remember, that true greatness of mind is the reward of prudent, cautious, inflexible self-control; the creature of impulse, the slave of his own uncontrolled and impetuous passions, is never a sure guide or safe depository of the liberty or the rights of others. Do not fall into the common error of mistaking notoriety for fame; one is a needy mountebank, who by trick and grimace, cheats the gaping crowd of its huzzas and its pennies; the other is that silent, but solid esteem, which always follows great actions and noble sentiments; the one is as invariably despised in the same proportion in which

the other is coveted. Independently of the considerations heretofore alluded to, there are reasons which should peculiarly attract the American Student to the study of the Ancient languages. The Republics of Greece and Rome were based upon the principle of the rights of men, and although this principle is frequently obscured by their turbulence and lust of conquest, still their whole history illustrates their ardent love of liberty, and furnishes the world with the most sublime examples of individual heroism, and extraordinary devotion to the love of country.

The animating principle of the distinguished men who have figured in the history of Modern Europe, was loyalty—a blind attachment to the person of the Prince; they invariably separate the Prince from the people; with them, the Monarch is the State; and while they manifest the most enthusiastic devotion, the most extravagant chivalry in the service of the former, they seem to forget the latter have any rights, or were intended for any more exalted purpose, than to minister to the pleasures or to subserve the glory of an individual. It is true, a brighter day is now dawning through this gothic obscurity, but it has still the colouring, and the impress of former times and of old associations, which must for years obscure its beauty. That deep and innate taint of selfish exclusiveness, which is the characteristic of all Monarchical Governments, must for years prevail amidst the ultra liberalism of modern Europe. Where can we find produced by the force alone of mere human institutions, such admirable specimens of the moral sublime, as is every where to be met with in the history of Rome? What student, whose soul is in the smallest degree alive to the “*divinæ particu-*

*lam auræ*” which breathes through Livy’s pictured page, or the sterner annals of Tacitus, but feels his respect and admiration for his species exalted, when he reads of the lofty and disinterested tone of national character, so common among this extraordinary people.

That grandeur of soul in adversity, that enthusiastic love of country, that innate dignity of character, which relies upon its own strength, and seeks support alone from its own well settled principles, no where shines forth with such undiminished lustre, as in the annals of Rome.

In Rome, the love of liberty was not confined to a few individuals who made politics a trade; it penetrated every grade of society, until it embraced the nation. The name of a Roman Citizen was the proudest, as well as the most respected title throughout the world; the intensity of the feeling was heightened to a passion; it absorbed all other considerations. Shall we turn from the consideration of this people, whose discipline for their youth likewise “comprehended every thing that could add strength to the body, activity to the limbs, or grace to the motions,” and grope our way amidst the intrigues and venality of Courts, where

In soldier, churchman, patriot, man in power,  
'Tis avarice all, ambition is no more.

Apart from those examples of individual and great moral excellence, which continually attract our admiration in the earlier annals of the Roman commonwealth, the study of the Greek and Latin languages is best calculated to eradicate a defect in our national taste, which threatens to become permanent among us.

I allude to that propensity among our literary men, as well as statesmen, for clothing the simplest ideas in

such a multitude of words, that it requires great labour and perseverance to hunt out the grain of wheat amidst the mass of chaff.

The study of that terseness and simple elegance of style, which may be said to be almost peculiar to the ancients, which makes the sound an echo to the sense, would do much to banish from among us that barren and voluminous taste "which evaporates in a folio the spirit that would scarcely suffice for an epigram." If the object of all mental efforts, as well oral as written, is to operate upon the feelings or understanding of others, it certainly becomes a matter of primary importance, that they should be clothed in language whose matter and manner would strike the mind, and not exhaust that attention it was intended to rouse and stimulate. Can we suppose that the histories of Heroditus or Thucydides would have received such plaudits from the assembled multitudes at the Olympic Games, or lived down to the remotest posterity, models for imitation, or that Demosthenes could have raised the courage of the degenerate Athenians almost to madness, had they have used the American formula for achieving excellence, and announced to that spiritual multitude, that they were about to go "at length into the subject?" This monkish taste for measuring literature by its length, is marring its influence and narrowing the sphere of its exertions, and in our State documents and business papers is an intolerable grievance, as well as a great waste of time. It is by no means extravagant to say, that the study of classical literature does more to invigorate the understanding, to chasten the taste, to elevate the tone of honorable ambition, by its noble example, than any other mental pursuit. It imparts

to its youthful votaries energetic ideas, and that practical common sense not to be met with in the frivolous literature of the day, which enervates the understanding, by keeping the imagination constantly and injuriously excited.

Proud and turbulent Rome, the terror of mankind, the invincible of nations, bowed before the civilization of Greece, and became a captive to her slave. The history of the world attests the fact, that wherever the literature of Greece has been cultivated, a high state of civilization has been produced. It was its influence which rolled back the torrent of Gothic ignorance and barbarism, which, during the middle ages, covered the fairest portion of Europe, and at one time, threatened to envelope the world in darkness. Arabia and Egypt have benefitted mankind, by the study of the exact and severer sciences; but among those nations civilization trembled as a star, and never showed forth with meridian splendour. Their highest aspirations were the rude efforts of barbaric pomp, or the cumbrous magnificence of a rich but tasteless splendour. The Pyramid of Egypt will stand an object of wonder to posterity, and a monument of the coarse and uncouth labour of its people, "*rudis indigestaque moles.*" Without being accused of depreciating the exact sciences, I trust I may be permitted to remark, that their exclusive study produces an unsocial feeling, and abstracts the mind too much from that attrition in society, which is necessary to polish and refine our coarse natures.--The universal burst of indignant sympathy which pervaded the civilized world, in the late contest of Greece for freedom, was a sincere tribute of deep-felt respect for her departed greatness. It was not disgust at



Turkish barbarity, it was not simply a pure spirit of Christian charity for oppressed brethren, that roused the succour of Europe and America; it was the recollection of her sages, and the renown of her heroes; it was the spirit of her brighter days, imbibed in our youth, which called upon us, with a parent's claim, to defend our greatest benefactor. We felt indignant that the "clime of battle and of song" should be trod by the savage and the stranger. I cannot, Gentlemen, better compensate you for the time I am consuming, than by urging this subject upon your attention, in the spirit, if not in the language of one of the most illustrious men of antiquity: "These studies (says Cicero) are the food of youth, and the consolation of age; they adorn prosperity, and are the comfort and refuge of adversity; they are pleasant at home, and no incumbrance abroad; they accompany us at night, in our travels and our rural retreats."

Be not discouraged by any difficulties; and do not for a moment permit yourselves to doubt whether our age or country should venture into the list of fair and honorable competition. 'Tis not the space between Babyce and Onacion which alone produces brave men; but wherever the youth are ashamed of what is base, resolute in a good cause, and more inclined to avoid disgrace than danger, there are the men who are terrible to their enemies."

Whatever may be the various opinions entertained upon the subjects proper to occupy the Academic course, the object of all of them is ultimately the same, the formation of a judicious system of education. Whether this object can be attained simply by storing the mind with a multitude of detached, independent ideas, whether those ideas be classical or scientific, or both, is an en-

quiry well worth the serious attention of all, not only of those who are occupied in the education of the youth of the country, but of every individual who feels an interest in the permanent welfare of that country. Education, to be useful, must be practical; it must cultivate the moral faculties, as well as the intellectual.—Where the latter are exclusively regarded, we merely enlarge the power of mischief of bold, bad men, and render that a curse which was intended to be a blessing to society. That great intellectual endowments cannot exist with great moral depravity, is a theory rather flattering to the vanity of man, than founded upon an accurate knowledge of his history. The object of education, then, should be to eradicate those vicious propensities, to form correct moral and religious principles, and to train the mind, by judicious cultivation, so as to apply those principles to the benefit of society.

Wherever this social benefit has not resulted from education, we may rest assured some material link in the chain was wanting, some delusion of vanity or ignorance has interposed, and sacrificed the permanent welfare of society, to the temporary aggrandizement, or the false and hollow glory of the individual. In what, I would ask, is the State benefitted by the education of its youth, if they are sent abroad into the world, endowed with all the learning of the schools, and even with their moral faculties strengthened with the greatest care and attention, if all this mass of knowledge is to remain a dead letter, through its unfortunate possessor being ignorant how it should be applied to the business and pursuits of men? Knowledge, says an eminent philosopher, (D. Steuart) does not depend upon the number of ideas we may have, but upon the



number of relations we may perceive between them.—There is, doubtless, a beautiful order and connection of dependencies throughout nature, which is invisible to our ordinary perceptions, but which is not placed so far beyond the reach of the mind of man, that it cannot be penetrated and made ultimately subservient to his happiness and prosperity. It teaches us that every thing we perceive, from the smallest grain of sand washed by the sea, up to the brightest luminary of the skies, is bound up in one universal whole, governed by fixed and unchangeable laws, connected with each other by unseen but indissoluble ties, and all tending to one common end. The mind of man, for a wise purpose, has been placed in the midst of this great whole, with faculties sufficient, by judicious cultivation, to perceive its beautiful order, to scan its wonderful relations, to extract from its inimitable perfection, the purest wisdom and the soundest rules to guide the motions of his lesser world. It teaches us that sublime truth, worth all other human knowledge, to follow nature, as the only unerring guide for our limited faculties.

Obvious as this truth now is, familiar as household words, as it has become in the mouth of the merest tyros in science, still the ignorance of it kept the world for years groping in darkness. Until the genius of Bacon had taught mankind, by the slow but sure process of inductive reasoning, to go abroad into the world and explore the mysteries of nature, the mind of man, trammelled by fancies and conceits, endeavored by a vain philosophy, which drew from its own resources alone, to account for all the operations of nature ; hypothesis succeeded hypothesis, paradox was piled upon paradox, until the intellect was inextricably confounded by its own inter-

minable jargon. It was the glory of Bacon to have rescued philosophy from the cells of the monks, and to have introduced her to the world without. This natural order and connexion extends likewise to our moral being, whose judicious cultivation is essential to the complete symmetry and perfection of the whole plan of creation. I call, says Milton, a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously, all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war. Let this wise injunction be fulfilled, let education become the handmaid of nature, and man, fashioned in the image of his creator, endowed with various faculties vastly superior to all other created beings, will stand an "emanation of the all beauteous mind," upon the apex of this magnificent creation, with an intellect erect and looking heavenward as the body that enshrines it. I must forbear trespassing much longer upon your attention, lest I become liable to the charge which I have reprobated, and swell into a dissertation, that which was designed for a familiar address. There is, however, another subject closely allied with the one to which I have endeavored to call your attention, and upon which I cannot resist the temptation of so suitable an opportunity, of making a few passing remarks. I allude to a system of popular education. It must be apparent to the most superficial observer, that the entire Southern Country is deplorably deficient in the means of disseminating education generally among the people. Of Colleges, we have an abundance, where those persons who have the means can be educated. But of those incipient primary schools, which should carry mental aliment to the door of the poorest citizen of the republic, we are extremely deficient.

We are trying in this Country an extraordinary experiment in Government, an experiment which gives to numbers the entire and almost exclusive control over the lives, the property, and the well being of the community. Is it not then absurd to contend, that it is not the duty of the State to see that every citizen is qualified by education, to exercise these delicate and important trusts. Lycurgus, the wisest of lawgivers, when he undertook the reformation of the morals of Sparta, laid the foundation of his system in the education of every citizen who might by any possibility, be called into the service of his country. The simplest husbandman prepares his ground with care, before he entrusts to it his seed, or before he expects a product.— Is it not more absurd to expect order, sobriety of deportment, and all the virtues of a good citizen, where every wild passion, every vicious propensity, engendered by pride and fostered by ignorance, have been permitted to take root, and choke by their noxious exuberance, the few good seed which a generous nature may have planted. The age of power and force is passing away, that of artifice and chicane is succeeding; the race is no longer to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; let the understandings of the people, by which alone they can be effectually controlled, be correctly cultivated, and our fair land will no longer be convulsed by those scenes of turbulence and violence, which threaten disgrace, if not destruction to our institutions.— I cannot for a moment suppose that the apathy which exists in the South, upon this vitally important subject, arises from that cold and selfish philosophy which doubts the capacity of the people for self-government, or which fears the impulse which general education would give

to the community. Those qualities which ennoble our natures, do not shine aloft like constellations, the possession of a gifted few, merely to attract an idle gaze; an all bountiful and beneficent Creator has scattered them at the feet of man, like flowers, needing only his culture, that they may spring up to adorn the humble cottage as well as the lordly palace. The neglect of general education, which prevails in the South, is not only a reproach to our legislation, but a gross abandonment of those principles of equality, we so strenuously profess; for it is a ridiculous mockery to talk of an equality between ignorance and knowledge. While our social relations are embittered, and the recesses of the domestic circle daily penetrated by the angry disputes engendered by the evanescent and frivolous political topics of the hour, it is melancholy to reflect that those subjects vitally essential to the purity and existence of our institutions, can scarcely attract a passing notice. North Carolina has laboured under peculiar disadvantages upon this subject. The Revolution found her just issuing from a recent internal contest, likewise bleeding from the privations and sufferings of an Indian war, maintained nearly single handed by a sparse population, with exhausted resources; she yet went heroically through that severe struggle without a murmur.

At the close of the war of the Revolution, she, with other Southern States, with a liberality unequalled in history, surrendered to the General Government not only the most profitable sources of revenue, but an immense Western domain, for which she had so dearly paid. Sheared thus voluntarily of her strength, she has been left friendless and unaided, to struggle with exhausted resources. Happily, by great industry and economy,

contending with extreme difficulties, she has come out from the crucible of the Revolution, with her honour untouched; and she can now perceive a brighter future through the dreary past. You, Gentlemen, blessed with all the advantages of education, are about going forth into the world, many of you, doubtless, to occupy stations in life, where your example and your exertions may exercise vast influence upon your countrymen. Do not forget that to your residence here, to the sources of knowledge which you have here amply displayed before you, must be attributed the larger part of all your future success and happiness in life. Seek, then, to render these blessings universal; labour to bestow upon your less fortunate fellow-citizens the advantages you have enjoyed.

Wherever the cause of literature and education is involved, be found their firm friends, their steady and unyielding advocates; and rest assured, in doing so, you will do more to advance the cause of virtuous freedom, and to benefit your country, than by ages of barren and idle declamation about liberty and equality:

For Earth is sick,  
And Heaven is weary of the hollow sounds  
Which men and nations use, whene'er they speak  
Of Truth and Justice.











